

Using Local Government to Attract Green Business

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Overview of Methods

- Zoning Ordinance Revisions
- Special Permits
- Zone Changes
- Overlay Districts
- Discontinue grandfathered uses
- Green Business Awards

Doesn't Government Want Green?

- Lack of Knowledge.
- Fear of being seen as “anti-business”.
- Belief that Mr. “my best friend since high school” has the community’s best interest at heart.
- Tax revenue is more important than anything.

Zoning Ordinance Revisions

- The zoning ordinance should be your best community friend.
- Take the time to understand what the zoning is around you and what uses are allowed in those zones.
- Petition to improve the standards in the ordinance if they are too weak.
- If the ordinance is unacceptable- change it!

Performance Based Zoning

- Based on the belief that the impacts of any land use are a function of performance rather than the type of use itself.
- Based on the belief that with today's technologies, any business can be transparent in the environment it is in.
- Designed to hold everyone to the same set of measurable standards.

Benefits of the Model

- Development follows the vision and goals for the community.
- Encourages dialogue between the public and decision makers.
- Provides community with a competitive edge for attracting home buyers.
- Contributes to a higher quality of life through better environmental protection.

Benefits cont.

- Greater fairness to everyone.
- Less need to change and update the bylaws.
- Faster permit process.

Problems with the Model

- Enforcement of the standards can be cumbersome. Code Enforcement must have the capacity!!!
- The standards are attached to uses that are “allowed by right”, making the permitting process faster...therefore-
- Trade-off is that there is no public review process.

Examples of Standards

- In no case shall the business be open to the public at times earlier than 7:00 a.m. nor later than 9:00 p.m.
- No offensive noise, vibration, smoke, dust, odors, heat or glare shall be produced.
- Impervious surfaces must incorporate green surface technology that protects storm water quality.

Examples, Cont.

- Provide Your Ideas Here!!!
- Provide the outcome you wish to achieve- don't dictate the specific technology that must be used. This gives the business some ownership over the solution.

Special Permits

- Educate the decision makers about standards or conditions that must be met.
- Lack of compliance can lead to the permit being revoked.
- Educate the community about the importance of the standards and make sure they articulate these facts at a public meeting.

Zone Changes

- Local ordinance that allows 10 registered voters to petition for a zone change of private property.
- Used to prevent really intense industrial uses from entering a neighborhood.
- Older industrial neighborhoods that have since become residential with the decline in manufacturing need to be re-zoned.

Overlay Districts

- Additional set of standards that apply to a designated geographic area.
- Allows the same set of uses in the underlying zone, but places stricter regulations on them.
- Can be easier to pass in the short term than changing the entire zoning ordinance.
- This can be used in new or updated Urban Renewal Plans as well.

Discontinue Grandfathered Uses

- In Massachusetts, most cities and towns have a “lack of use” clause.
- Most governments do not police this rule which is generally 2 years of non-use.
- Neighborhood organizations can monitor vacant businesses and document lack of use.
- Makes way for a greener businesses that conform to new standards.

Green Business Awards

- Provide incentives for existing businesses to comply with better standards.
- Free marketing.
- Recognition as a model for the community.

Thank You!

